KINONIK

THE ORGANIZER (1963)

Directed by Mario Monicelli

WEDNESDAY APRIL 9th 2pm / 7pm

SATURDAY APRIL 12th 7pm



“Very interesting and very odd,” wrote a reviewer of **The Organizer** (1963). An early example of the emerging form of commedia all'italiana, this labor film delighted and confused international audiences. Directed by the originator of the form himself, Mario Monicelli, its wildly vacillating tone and serious subject matter comes together to form a unique emotional experience. It strives to meet the “challenge of modernity” -- that is, to “live without illusions and without becoming disillusioned” -- and does that by laughing in the face of life’s absurdity.

Starring Marcello Mastroianni as the titular Organizer in turn-of-the-century Turin, the hounded ragged intellectual skulks into a factory town. He encounters beleaguered textile workers attempting to stand against their brutal fourteen hour workdays and complete lack of safety protections. What follows would be a standard drama in anyone’s hands but Monicelli. Instead, in alternating scenes of tragedy, comedy, sentimentality, and strangeness, the workers struggle against practical and interpersonal forces to better their situation. Whether or not they are successful, they will still laugh -- and we will laugh with them. As Monicelli said, “The themes that make one laugh always stem from poverty, hunger, misery, old age, sickness, and death. These are the themes that make Italians laugh, anyway.”

An apocryphal but sincere reminder that labor rights were earned by blood and long struggle, a struggle which continues today, The Organizer invites its audience to confront reality without succumbing to despair or avoiding hard truths. A fantastic introduction to commedia all'italiana and a prescient film in the face of a rapidly changing labor landscape, **The Organizer** makes for the perfect odd night out.

Trivia: in Italy, it was released under the title I compagni, or “the comrades”, which better reflects the true focus of the film - the Organizer character is often not in the forefront.

Marcello Mastroianni is generally regarded as one of Italy's most iconic male performers of the 20th-century, who played leading roles for many of the country's top directors, in a career spanning 147 films between 1939 and 1996.